

# The Athenian Mercury.

Saturday, December 15. 1694.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether in singing the praise of God in the publick worship, it be not a sin for a profane, impious, or ignorant person to joyn with others in many of the Psalms, since they were Davids private meditations, and prayers and praises? And whether such persons singing be not rather offensive then pleasing in the sight of God, since 'tis agreed by all, that he only accepts the service of the Heart; and the Apostle directs to sing with Grace in the heart? Pray your opinion and direction how far such a person may joyn with others? Nay, suppose him a civil moral man, that yet can't say as David does in many places, what shall he do, and how shall he so perform this duty as to be acceptable to God?

Ans. There's no Question but the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, whether it be in Prose or Verse, singing or not, which are only accidental Circumstances that don't enter into the nature of the thing, nor make any alteration in't. But notwithstanding this, there's no doubt but the wicked man ought to pray that he may be made better, i. being only the impenitently wicked, those who are resoly'd to continue so, who mock God with their prayers, and whom for that reason he bids bring no more vain oblations. But 'tis a vastly different case in those who would be better, and resolve to be so. However, none affirm, that every Expression in David's Psalms is proper for every man; which is so far from being true, that they are not all applicable to the same state of the Church, but some to a time of prosperity, others of adversity. Much less are those high expressions of Devotion, and hope and trust in God, and delight in his word and Commandments, which we find every where scatter'd through the Divine works of the Psalmist, any way suitable to an ill man, who has not so much as attain'd to the lowest degrees of Virtue; nor can he, if he's ingenuous, make use of 'em, or joyn with 'em till he grows better and more religious: 'tis doubtless a sin in him to joyn in those Psalms with a resolution of being still wicked, or without a Resolution of amendment. However the Church may lawfully and profitably make use of them both in her stated Liturgy, and occasional Devotions, and has actually done so for these many years in her stated Liturgy, which must have something suitable to all persons, tho' all can't be so. And in her Hymns and Lauds, which doubtless are a necessary part of publick worship, wherein all must be suppos'd fit to joyn, and 'tis their own fault if they are not: Nay, we know not why one that is but imperfectly virtuous may not joyn in the praises of God, as well as in the penitential Psalms, tho' tis own'd he can't so properly in Davids Protestations of his Piety and Innocence: He ought therefore to labour to increase in Virtue, to lead a Godly, as well as a righteous and sober life, that he may sincerely, and humbly make use of those higher flights of Devotion.

Quest. 2. *Quomodo formantur, &c.* How are animals form'd? 'Tis indeed generally now agreed that they are form'd ex ovo; but that's not here the Question. But, How, out of matter which appears plainly homogeneous, shou'd be form'd an Animal, which consists of so many and so different parts.

Some think this is done by the Fermentation of the Seed; but it seems not possible, that infinite variety of parts, so aptly dispos'd, shou'd arise from thence. Others assert, that the first seed of the several animals created by God, did formally include all seeds in it self; but this also seems very difficult to conceive, because of the infinite number of Animals which have been form'd from this present time to the Creation of the World; tho' to this indeed they say, that

the parts of matter are Infinite. Others are of opinion, that all the Seeds of the several Animals were in the beginning of the World created by God, and that we take 'em in daily, so that masculine atoms, or seeds, are fitted and adhere to men, and feminine to women. They add a wonderful thing, that there are several little animals moving themselves about in the seed, distinctly seen in the Microscope. Pray which of these opinions do you esteem most probable?

Ans. Tho matter be granted homogeneous of it self, and in its own nature, and all we see or handle, or any way perceive by our senses, must be material, shou'd for all that puzzle the greatest Chymist, or Philosopher in the World, to produce so much as one atom of this matter, purely homogeneous; it being, we are apt to believe, inseparably mixt by the wise hand of nature, so as to defy all total dissolution, unless by him who first made it, and who has out of different principles compounded and so wonderfully united it. Which being granted, we can't see any such difficulty in that objection. How an heterogeneous animal shou'd be compos'd out of matter, tho' that matter be allow'd to be in its self homogeneous; since whatever matter may be in it self, and its essence, and rude conception, (which perhaps we don't know much more certainly then the nature of Spirits, or immaterial objects) this is certain that matter nowhere appears to our senses but 'tis various, and its parts heterogeneous. However, the modus of the Formation of animals is still in the dark, and perhaps still will be so, and preserv'd among the magnalia naturæ; the inspir'd writers expressing themselves here at least, according to the capacity of the Learned as well as the Vulgar, when they acknowledge the ignorance of mankind. "How the Bones do grow in the Womb of her that is with child, and that we are awfully and wonderfully made, when we are fashion'd secretly in the lower parts of the Earth. However, it seems not probable that meer Fermentation shou'd produce this; or action and re-action of one part of matter upon another; tho' we grant it may have a strange and unaccountable power in the alteration of matter purely insensible or inanimate; Nay, this Fermentation may dilate, and extreemly alter the parts of animate matter; when they are already delineated, and markt out by the Finger of the Almighty; but still, matter being a principle purely passive and irrational, we can't conceive how it shou'd jostle it self into an Animal, any more then into a World, it being much more easy for stones to leap out of a Quarry and make an Escorial, a Versailles; or a Tchilmanaar, without asking the Architect's leave, or calling for the Mason with his mortar and Trowel to assist 'em. Nor seems it necessary, or rational, that the first seed of every Creature shou'd formally include all those seeds that shou'd be afterwards produc'd from it, since 'tis, we think, sufficient that it shou'd potentially include 'em, as Abraham did Levi, or as one Kernel all those indeterminate Kernels that may be thence afterwards rais'd; The first seeds being doubtless of the same nature with those that now exist after so many thousand years; first, the order of time making only an accidental difference, which if we don't grant, we must run into this absurdity, that every thing does not produce its like; No Bird a Bird, or a Horse a Horse, which would be to fill all the World with Monsters, which Nature does so much abhor. But every Seed or Kernel, for example, does not now actually, and formally contain all the Seeds or Kernels which may be at any times afterwards produced from them. A Kernel has indeed, as we have found by Microscopes, a pretty fair and distinct delineation of the Tree and Branches into which it may be afterwards form'd, by the fermentation of its Parts and addition of suitable matter, as in that Tree are P  
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rially contained all the thousands and millions of *Kernels*, and so of *Trees*, that shall or may be thence rais'd afterwards; and so we are apt to believe it must be in the first *Animals*; whereas the *finest Glasses*, which are sometime since brought to an almost incredible and miraculous Perfection, can't discover actual *Seeds* in *Seeds*, or *Kernels* in *Kernels*; tho if there were any such thing as an actual *least*, or so much talk of *Atome*, they might, one would think, be discovered by them; since they have shown us, not only *Seeds*, but ev'n new *Animals* in many parts of matter where we never suspected 'em, and ev'n in some of the smallest *Animals* themselves, whereof our naked sight can take any cognizance. As for the parts of matter, be they how they will, finite or infinite (as there are almost *Remonstrances* on both sides, and 'tis of no great concern if men are *Sceptics* in some *Points* in *Philosophy*, so they are but firm (not *Dogmatical*) in what's of greater moment) it makes, we think, no great alteration in the thing; for if these parts are not all *Seminal*, we are ne'r the nearer. Nay at best an absurdity seems to be the consequence of this hypothesis, because if those parts are *infinite*, and includes all successive Generations of *Animals*, it would, we think, follow, that the number of *Animals* too, should be infinite; nay, the number of any *Insect*, any *Animal*; and instead of one, we should get a thousand *Infinities*, and 'twould be strange too, if they should not, some of 'em, be greater or less, than one another.

For that pleasant Fancy, that all the seeds of *Animals* were distinctly Created at the beginning of Time and things, that they are mingled with all the *Elements*, that we take 'em in with our Food, and the He and She *Atomes* either fly off, or stay as they like their Lodgings; we hope there's no need of being serious to confute it. And we may ask of this, as well as the former Hypothesis, what need of 'em, when the work may be done without 'em? The *Kernel*, as before, contains the *Tree*; the *Tree*, a thousand other Fruits, and ten thousand *Kernels*. The first *Animal* several others, as have been discover'd by Glasses in the Instance the *Querist* mentions, and as many of them as Nature can dispose of, and provide fit Nourishment for, are produc'd into what we may call actual being, in comparison to what they before enjoy'd. If the *Querist* should go on to ask us, whether these imperfect Creatures have all distinct Souls, while lurking yet in their Parent; we answer, there is, we think, no need of it: They are not yet so much as well defin'd Bodies, but rather parts of the Parent. There is requir'd yet a great deal more of the Chymistry and Mechanism of Nature, and that in both Sexes, to make one or more of these sort of *Insect-beings*, the Off-spring of Man, capable of receiving a rational Soul; but when that capacity comes in time enough to infuse it, tho when that is, and wherein it consists, perhaps he only knows who is the Father of Spirits, as well as the Former of the Universe.

Quest. 3. At High-gate there was a Man and his Wife, who living unhappily some few weeks ago, quarrelled, and after Fought together; where upon the man passionately wish'd, That his Tongue might cleave to the roof of his Mouth, if ever he spoke one word more to her; he was immediately taken speechless, and in a very extraordinary manner ill, and disabl'd from taking any thing down his Throat, and continued in this condition for about a Week, and then dy'd; the Woman languish'd for some time after of the blows he had given her, often complaining he had given her her Deaths wound, and about a Week or two since, died also. She has since appeared to several, and that in the day time; First to her two Daughters, and but yesterday to several others, with her hair about her Ears, as when she dy'd; this being a case extraordinary, deserves your particular inquiry; and it being so near the Town, you may easily satisfy your selves of the Truth of it, with all those circumstances which perhaps have not come to my knowledge; therefore pray, Gentlemen, oblige the World with this Relation, and your Opinion of it, and in particular, the cause of her appearing. Answer. We would desire any Sober Person to make Enquiry into the Truth of this matter, and give us the Names of those concern'd, and their own, that we may be able to give the Publick better satisfaction about it.

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